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College of New Jersey
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ADDRESS

OF THE

TRUSTEES

OF THE

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COLLEGE OF NEW-JERSEY;

25-6
TO THE

INHABITANTS

OF THE

UNITED STATES.

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ADDRESS

*Of the Trustees of the College of New-Jersey,
to the Inhabitants of the United States.*

PRINCETON, March 18th, 1802.

THE burning of the college edifice in this place on the 6th instant, has been announced in all the public papers. This melancholy occurrence having occasioned a meeting of the Trustees of the College of New-Jersey, they have found it to be an indispensable obligation, arising out of the trust confided to them, to make a representation to the public, in behalf of the institution committed to their care. In doing this they are deeply sensible that every consideration, both of duty and interest, dictates, that they should exercise a peculiar caution not to depart from the simplicity of truth.

The College of New-Jersey was originally founded with a leading view to cherish the principles, and extend the influence of evangelical piety. At the same time it was hoped and expected, that as the spirit of genuine religion is ever favorable to the interests of civil society, many warm and able advocates of these interests would be nurtured in the bosom of this institution. We trust it may be asserted without arrogance or vanity, that these views and hopes have not proved fallacious or extravagant. Whoever will look through the several departments of public life at present, or review the eventful scenes which our country has witnessed for half a century past, may be convinced that this college counts among those who have been most distinguished in sacred and in secular office, a number of her sons which she need not blush to compare with those of any sister institution.

One principal cause of the usefulness of this seminary, has been its complete independence on legislative influence and controul, and its dependance, as complete, on the benevolence and favor of an impartial public; which could alone be secured by its intrinsic merit, and its constant and vigorous efforts to render itself worthy of voluntary individual patronage—Previously to the American revolution it was, to say the least, commonly no object of favor with the government of the province. By the depreciation of continental money, and other events which took place during the revolution, the funds of the corporation, always inconsiderable, were nearly annihilated; while the buildings in their possession, by being alternately occupied by the contending armies, were reduced almost to a state of ruin. Since the revolution, the legislature of New-Jersey have made a grant of eighteen hundred pounds, appropriated by law to the repairing of the buildings, to the increase of the library, and to the provision of a philosophical apparatus—This is all the legislative aid that we ever have received; perhaps that we ever shall obtain.

Under every discouragement and difficulty, however, the institution has not only been supported and continued, but has been able in some measure to retrieve its losses. By the exertion of its friends and the small public bounty which was conferred, the buildings were put in tenantable repair, the library and philosophical apparatus became respectable, the faculty were comfortably provided for, the number of students was greatly increased, and all the future prospects of the college began to brighten. But alas! in one fatal day they were all clouded with the darkest gloom. The fair edifice, erected by the liberality and consecrated by the prayers of our pious and public spirited predecessors,

was totally consumed, and three thousand volumes of valuable books, with much private property of the students, perished in the flames. Under this inauspicious and afflictive event, which the providence of a holy God has permitted to take place, we are humbled and mourn.* But can we, ought we, so far to despond, as to suffer the establishment to become extinct? No; we are rather resolved, relying on that aid which has always hitherto been extended to us in the time of distress, to meet with increasing efforts the increasing billows of adversity. Our funds are indeed small;—they are as nothing when compared with our present necessities. But we are confident we have many friends; And when we recollect how much more numerous, as well as how much more wealthy, the individuals are who are likely to patronize the college now, than those were who established it at first;—when we recollect, above all, the pure designs, the ardent vows, the unshaken faith of those who laid its foundations, and call to mind that it has in fact been eminently blessed as a nursery both for church and state, we cannot distrust the event of our efforts. We cannot but hope that this temporary calamity is even to be over-ruled for a lasting benefit. Entertaining these sentiments, we have determined to recal the scattered students, to set about the rebuilding of the college without delay, and to cast ourselves on the care of Divine Providence, and on the public liberality, to bear us through.

But realizing for ourselves, and begging our friends to realize likewise, that confidence of success in an arduous undertaking without the

* The circumstances which attended the burning of the college were such as to leave little doubt that it was the effect of design; but though every effort has been used for that purpose, we have not yet been able to ascertain the incendiary.

most active and vigorous exertions to secure it, is rather weakness and presumption than any commendable or virtuous quality, we feel the necessity of using our utmost endeavors to obtain benefactions for the college. We have accordingly taken measures to open subscriptions for this purpose; and we beg for a candid indulgence while we address a few words

I.—TO THE FRIENDS OF RELIGION.

TO those who are comprehended in this description our college owed its original establishment; and we trust that the friends of religion now, will not be found less munificent than those who possessed this character fifty years ago. Your means of promoting laudable designs are greatly increased—Far from us be the injurious supposition that your disposition to do good is diminished. On you, we avow it explicitly, is our principal reliance. We have always endeavored to make the institution for which we solicit, a fountain of those principles which to you are the dearest and the most sacred; and these endeavors we mean to continue even with increased zeal. We propose to recommence the instructions of the college with new regulations, calculated to secure more effectually than ever, the moral and religious conduct of the youth entrusted to our care. We aim to make this institution an asylum for pious youth, so that in this day of general and lamentable depravity, parents may send their children to it with every reasonable expectation of safety and advantage. This we know will create us some enemies; but your patronage and prayers will, in every view, be more than a compensation for their hostility. We never, indeed, have been so attached to the dogmas of any religious sect as to impose them on our pupils—To all past experience we appeal as evidence, that religious intolerance has never

existed here. But religious principle always has been, and we hope always will be, cherished and guarded with care and vigilance. To the friends of religion, then, we look, to enable us to erect a bulwark against the assaults of impiety, and in defence of the pure gospel of Jesus Christ.

II.—TO THE FRIENDS OF SCIENCE.

AMONG those who merit this appellation we hope to find many of our warmest advocates and valuable patrons : For to all the friends of science, wherever educated, all her interests we know must be dear. In whatever sect or in whatever region, science prospers, men of science always rejoice. Rendered liberal by their own attainments, they can even abstract from the characters of others what is offensive to themselves, and still prize and esteem intelligence, talents and learning, wherever they are found. From you, gentlemen, we ask some pecuniary assistance to enable us to cultivate the sciences, in an institution which has not been the least distinguished in our country either for zeal or success in fostering them. Freed from sordid views and feelings by your education and habits of thinking, you will afford us cheerfully the assistance which may be proper—To press the subject on you would be impertinent.

III.—TO THE FRIENDS OF CIVIL LIBERTY.

OF those who are eminently entitled to this designation, many have received their education with us, and many more have always regarded us with kindness. In an hour of peculiar necessity we now solicit your benevolent interpo-

sition in our favor. A report, we are informed, has gone forth, that this institution is chargeable with political intolerance. The justness of this charge we absolutely deny. So far as the demands of religion can be supposed by any, to interfere with those of a political nature, we must indeed admit, nay we are forward to declare, that we shall sacredly regard the former, however they may be imagined to militate with the latter. But this declaration we are confident will be considered by good men of all parties as perfectly consistent with an unqualified denial of political intolerance. No pupil with us has ever been questioned on the subject of his political creed, nor withheld from a full and free avowal of his sentiments, nor received any censure or disapprobation for making known his opinions either in speech or writing. We trust, therefore, that neither this unfounded rumour, nor the insinuations of any individuals hostile to the college, will be permitted to operate to its disadvantage at this critical and necessitous juncture of its concerns. It fears no scrutiny on this topic. It makes some pretensions to services rendered to the social and political interests of the United States, and it now asks for the means of rendering more.

IV.—TO THE ALUMNI OF THE COLLEGE.

WE esteem it as a precious proof, both of our own fidelity, and of the benefit which you have received in this institution, that your zealous attachment to the place of your education is acknowledged by all, and thought by many to be singular. Our expectations from you on this occasion are sanguine. We know, that you cannot contemplate Nassau-hall as a heap of ruins without a deep excitement of your sensi-

bility, and a ready exertion of all your faculties to restore your Alma Mater to her former respectability. It will be much in your power to do this. Occupying stations of honor and distinction, possessing wealth or influence, scattered through all the populous cities, towns and districts of the union—what cannot you effect? It is surely not too much for us to say, that we *calculate* on your taking the lead in promoting subscriptions wherever you are, and on your care to forward the amount whenever it shall be collected. Never did the college need your zeal and services so much as now, and we will not believe, that when it is in your power to render us essential assistance, your disposition will not be equal to your ability. If we were even reduced to the necessity of depending on you alone to restore our affairs, such is our reliance on the former children of our care, that we should hold it criminal to resign our hopes. But when we have only to ask that you should be examples to others, and lead and prompt the general benevolence, our hope rises into assurance of success.

V.—TO THE WEALTHY AND BENEVOLENT OF EVERY DESCRIPTION.

WE are not insensible that numerous donations are solicited from you for various charitable purposes within the smaller circles of society in which you are included, or by institutions with which you are immediately connected. But allow us likewise to remark, or rather to repeat, that our college has no patronage but *your's*. It is your institution—you founded it; you have hitherto supported it; and when you withdraw your countenance it cannot exist. We wish not to be unduly importunate, and we feel that to solicit with earnestness, and yet with-

out meanness, is no easy task : But may we not say that among all the objects which demand your special regard, this college is almost on a footing with any other, and therefore that others ought not to claim your favors to the exclusion of this—Let us at least divide your liberality with them.

As our subscriptions are to be extensively circulated, we most of all deprecate the influence of an idea naturally suggested by such a circumstance ; namely—That as *many* are to give, large sums of money will certainly be collected, and therefore that each need give but a little, and indeed that it can be of no great importance if a number shall refuse to give at all. Is it not obvious that in this way, the very expectation that much will be received, may prevent its reception ? Let it be remembered, then, that between all speculative calculations about money and the actual receipts, the difference is usually very great. Let it be remembered that this difference is commonly the greatest of all when the basis of calculation is voluntary contribution. Let it be remembered that it is really a *large sum* that is necessary to repair our losses—Forty thousand dollars, will, we fear, fall considerably short of placing us on the same standing that we occupied before the late distressing conflagration of our property ; and even then we were greatly embarrassed for want of funds. Many items are necessary to rise to the requisite amount—But we forbear. May that God who hath the hearts of all men in his hand dispose you to give, and then reward you for the gift with the richest of his blessings.

Signed by order, and in behalf of the board of trustees, by

JOSEPH BLOOMFIELD,

*Governor of New-Jersey, and
President, ex-officio, of the
corporation.*

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